OPERA GUYED

BY

NEWMAN LEVY

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Opera Guyed

MY MUSICAL LIFE

Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakoff

Translated from the revised second Russian edition by
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BY

• NEWMAN LEVY •

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BY
REA IRVIN

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

E. G. L.

my best pal, and, I may add, my severest critic,
this book is affectionately dedicated

The author is indebted to *The New York Sun, Tribune* and *World, Harper's Magazine, The Saturday Evening Post* and the *D. A. C. News* for permission to reprint the verses in this book.

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Samson and Delilah

Samson and Delilah

'Twas in the land of Palestine, for so the stories state,
Young Samson met all comers and whipped any man his weight.
He never missed a chance to fight;
He swung a mean and wicked right,
Although at Gaza one dark night,
They say he got the gate.

Delilah was the loveliest of all the local vamps,
And on young Samson's form she cast her large alluring lamps.
"I love a manly man," she'd say.
Her work was clever for her day,
Till Samson fell the same old way
As many other champs.

"Don't think that I'm inquisitive," she said, "You got me wrong.
But tell your own Delilah, Sam, what makes you big and strong."
He said, "My strength is in my hair.
I've never seen a barber's chair.

No man can lick me while I wear
My hair and whiskers long."

So late that night Delilah did a most artistic job.
"I really hate to trim that guy," she murmured with a sob.
She started with an oil shampoo,
She clipped his beard and moustache too,
His curly locks she gave a new
And fashionable bob.

Next morning Sam awoke and found he'd scarcely strength to rise.
"That jane has played a dirty trick!" he said in some surprise.
"I'm off these oriental queens,
I must cut out these bedroom scenes—"
Just then in dashed the Philistines
And burned out both his eyes.

They dragged him to their temple, and they bound him fast in chains,
And all the local boys dropped in, and all the local janes.
"You ought to trim your hair a bit,"
They said, "and put a wave in it."
Those natives had a pretty wit,
Though somewhat shy on brains.

Then Samson grabbed the pillars of the temple on each side,
And with a mighty push he sent the columns flying wide.
The roof came tumbling on his head,
The Philistines were all knocked dead.
"Well, that brought down the house," he said,
And turned around and died.

Das Rheingold

Das Rheingold

They used to be known as the Rhine Girls
To the boys of the Walhalla set;
Woglinde, soprano; Flosshilde, contralto;
Wellgunde, a mezzo who used to sing alto.
They were plump but exceedingly fine girls,
And their place of abode was quite wet,
For they dwelt 'neath the Rhine, 'neath the soft flowing Rhine
Oh, they dwelt in the depths of the Rhine.

One day near the edge of the waters
A villainous baritone strolled.
He was known as Kid Alberich, ugly and swart,
And he leered at the girls in their maidenly sport,
And he chinned for a while with the daughters,
Then he wickedly grabbed all their gold,
And he beat it away from the banks of the Rhine,
While they mingled their tears with the Rhine.

Now the King of the gods was named Wotan
Who had planned a large country estate,
So two giants named Fafner and Fasolt he'd hired,
And agreed that he'd pay them the price they desired.
"Your young sister-in-law whom we dote on,
The fair Freia, we want for our mate."
So they built him Walhalla, imposing and fine,
With a beautiful view of the Rhine.

But at last when their job was completed,
And the time came for Wotan to pay,
His wife, Fricka, announced in no uncertain tone,
"You big boobs gotta leave my kid sister alone!"
Then an argument started, quite heated,
And poor Wotan was filled with dismay,
When Loge returned from a trip to the Rhine,
And he told of the theft from the Rhine.

To the depths of the earth hastened Wotan,
To the home of the Nibelung band.
From the Rhine gold they'd fashioned a magical ring,
And when Alberich wore it he ruled them as king.
He'd a magical helmet and coat on,
And they jumped at his lightest command,
For they labored like slaves in the depths of the mine,
As they brought him the wealth of the mine.

"It's an honor," said Wotan, "to know you,
For your fame's reached my humble abode.
People say that Houdini has nothing on you,
So I thought I'd drop in here to see if it's true."
Answered Alberich, flattered, "I'll show you,"
And he changed himself into a toad.
As he stepped on his neck Wotan murmured, "That's fine;
But the helmet and jewelry's mine!"

Back to Walhalla Wotan goes laden
With the treasure the Nibelungs bring;
But the giants remark, with a cynical smile,
As they heap up the gold in a glittering pile,
"If you're anxious to ransom the maiden
You must give us that helmet and ring."

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So he throws in the helmet he stole from the mine,
And the ring from the gold of the Rhine.

But the giants are ugly and scrappy,
And their partnership's broken up fast.
Fafner wallops poor Fasolt a clout on the head,
And he grabs all the gold as his brother falls dead.
But now Wotan and Fricka are happy
As they enter Walhalla at last
On a glittering rainbow bridge arching the Rhine,
While the Rhine daughters weep in the Rhine.

Tannhauser

Tannhauser

While strolling through the hills one day,
In search of joy and laughter.
Tannhauser, in his travels, came
Upon a flat run by a dame
Who said that Venus was her name;
At least so he said after.
Tannhauser said, "I like it here.
I think I'll stick around a year."

Tannhauser liked the place a lot;
He thought the girls entrancing,
And Venus entertained him so
He quite forgot he had to go.
They even ran a burlesque show,
With lots of songs and dancing.
(They pulled a dance of nymphs and satyrs
That wouldn't do in most theaytres.)

I can't tell all the things they did
(The censor would delete it)
Until our hero said, "I hate
To go so soon. It's getting late,
I quite forgot I have a date;
I guess I gotta beat it.
I've had a lovely time, old wren."
And Venus said, "Call soon again."

Tannhauser had a girl named Bess,
Her old man ran a glee club.
Our hero, passing by the place
That afternoon, came face to face
With Pa, returning from the chase,
Who said, "Come, visit *the* club.
We're running off a singing fest.
He weds my girl who sings the best."

A baritone named Wolfram
Started off the show quite gayly.
Tann looked at Bess and chuckled low,
"This Wolfram guy don't stand no show.
He couldn't book with Marcus Loew."
And tuned his ukelele.
"This lieder stuff don't make a hit,
I think I'll jazz it up a bit."

He bowed politely to the gang.
The following's the song he sang:
"These Wartburg janes don't go with me,
Gimme a kid with pep.
I know one that has it,
She knows how to jazz it,
Venus is the baby that can teach 'em how to step.
So strike up a tune on the old trombone.
Play that haunting solo on the saxaphone,
Put your arms around her waist and kick up your shoes,
Dancing with your Venus,
Prancing with your Venus,
Doing those Venusberg Blues."

The Wartburg boys got sore as pups,
And said, "Who let that guy in?
He sure has got a lot of gall
To pull that stuff around this hall.
Let's throw him off the castle wall,
Or punch his blooming eye in."
But Bess said, "No, boys, let it pass.
The lad ain't used to mix with class."

Tannhauser, feeling quite put out,
To go to Rome decided.
Returning in a year or less
He said, "I think I'll call on Bess
And square myself with her. I guess
No gent would act like I did."
But Bess's grief has made her croak.
That girl could never take a joke.

Tannhauser said, "Well, that ends that.
Since all is o'er between us

This Wartburg joint is far from gay,
I'm lonesome for the Great White Way,
I think I'll call this day a day
And telephone to Venus.
That little French kid was a bear;
I wonder if that blonde's still there."

A band of pilgrims passing by,
Returning from an outing,
Said, "Listen, bo, don't give up hope;
We've been to Rome to see the Pope,
We're handing you the latest dope:
His staff has started sprouting."
Tannhauser said, "Oh, is that so!"
And died. I think it's some fool show.

Tosca

Tosca

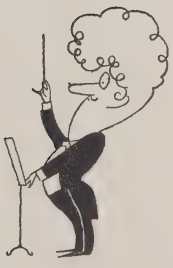
Well, I've went and saw a wop'ra, an' I'm offen them shows for life.
Me fer a snappy movie, an' the same goes fer the wife.
Op'ras kin run fer Astor an' Morgan an' all them eggs,
But gimme a show with action, where the dames has all got legs.
Like this it is: Last Friday we're tossin' the clickin' cubes,
When I win three hundred berries from a flock o' hard boiled rubes.
So the wife climbs into her war paint an' she drags me off to a show
That they call by the name o' Tosca,—at seven bucks a throw.
Fourteen berries it sets me to listen to some fat wop
Bawlin' his crazy head off like he don't know when to stop.
Fourteen hard earned berries to hear them dagoes shout.
An' this is the plot of the story, the way I dope it out:

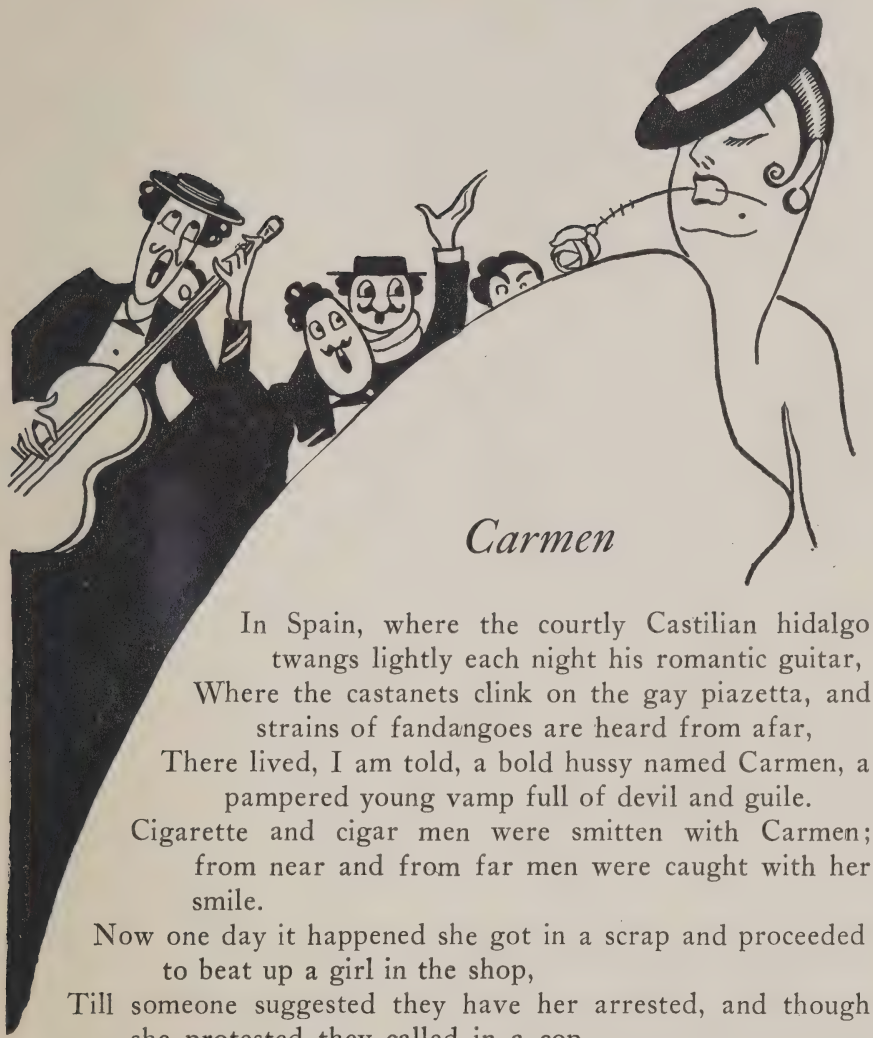
A bird by the name Angelotti who is doin' a bit in the coop
Makes his getaway outa the hoosegow while the keepers are lappin' their soup;
Gives the loud razz to the coppers, an' leavin' the bulls in the lurch

Does a Bergdoll to Cavaradossi, his pal that is paintin' a church.
Now Mario Cavaradossi's a lad that paints pitchers by hand,
An' he's fell for a jane they call Tosca; she sings op'ra songs up at the Strand.
Well, as soon as he lamps Angelotti he slips him a scuttle o' chow,
An' he says "On your way, little stranger; this joint ain't no place for you now."
Then Tosca drops in fer a visit, an' they sit there some minutes and kid,
But Mario don't put her jerry to where he's got Angelo hid.
An' while they sit chinnin' and laughin' at the line this here Mario pulls,
"My Gawd," she says, "if it ain't Scarpy!" an' in walks the chief of the bulls.
Now this Scarpia's batty on Tosca; he's a goof that sandpapers his throat,
An' he gives the young pair the once over, an' then right away loses his goat.
"Say, cut it," he tells him. "We've got you for helping that dago to blow.
Snap out of it! Pack up your paintbox. You're wanted at headquarters, bo!"
The next act's in Scarpia's office, where Mario's went for a ride,
An' after they've printed an' mugged him they're beatin' his hide off inside.
But never a squeal does he give 'em, though they smear him all over the jail.
An' then Tosca blows into the office. She's been chasin' around after bail.
An' her an' the chief have a confab. Says Scarpia, very polite,
"What wonderful weather we're havin' though it looks like it's cloudy to-night.
They're sweepin' a cell out at Sing Sing for your gentleman friend there inside.
I told him he's gotta plead guilty. If he goes to the bat, babe, he'll ride."

Then Tosca says, "Say, chief, have pity. He done it fer me an' the kid;
An' he ain't gonna squeal on the dago. I'd throw down the rat if he did."
"Say, look here," says Scarpy to Tosca, an' he pours her three fingers o' brew,
"I ain't got no love fer that paint guy, but I'd leave home an' mother fer you.
I'll throw that egg's case if you say so; but I gotta know where I get off."
An' Tosca says, "Sure, kid, I get you," and she swallas her brew with a cough.
Then Scarpia goes to the table, an' he looks like he's writin' a note
When Tosca quick grabs up a cheese knife an' she sticks the poor boob in the throat.
Then she lays him out swell on the carpet,—puts the candlesticks next to his head.
"Old Steve Merritt," she says, "couldn't beat this," an' she leaves the stiff layin' there dead.
The next act's the roof o' the hoosegow, an' poor Mario's near gave up hope,
When Tosca breaks in on the double, an' she slips him an earful o' dope.
"Say, I jipped that there bull an' I framed it so they'll pull a fake shoot fer a stall."
Then along come the doughboys with rifles and back Mario up to the wall.
The sergeant gives orders to fire, an' they plug the poor fish full o' lead,
An' Tosca screams, "Scarpia's bilked me. They've went and shot Mario dead."
There's voices heard comin', an' Tosca decides that it's time fer to blow,
So she grabs up her skirts,—does a brodie . . . An' that there's the end o' the show.

Carmen

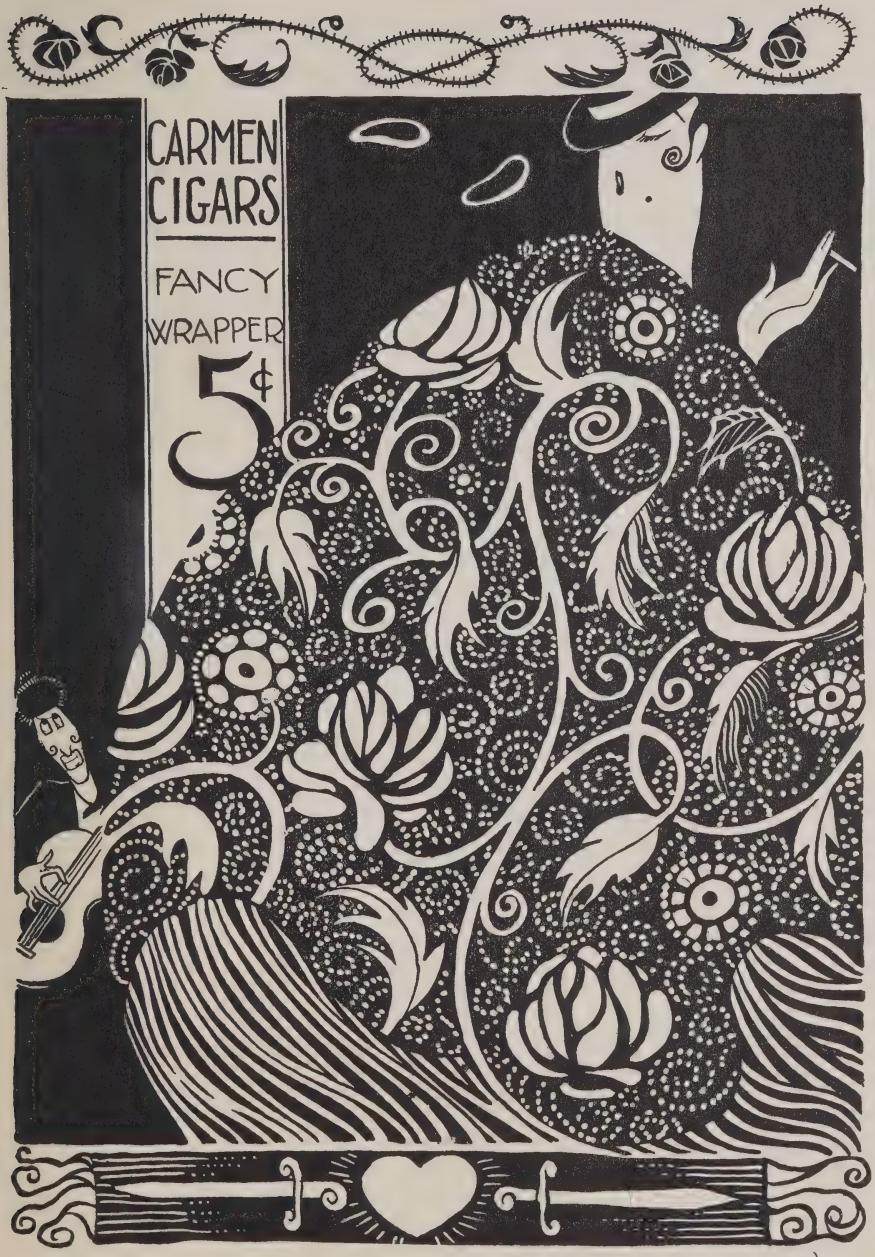




Carmen

In Spain, where the courtly Castilian hidalgo
twangs lightly each night his romantic guitar,
Where the castanets clink on the gay piazetta, and
strains of fandangoes are heard from afar,
There lived, I am told, a bold hussy named Carmen, a
pampered young vamp full of devil and guile.
Cigarette and cigar men were smitten with Carmen;
from near and from far men were caught with her
smile.
Now one day it happened she got in a scrap and proceeded
to beat up a girl in the shop,
Till someone suggested they have her arrested, and though
she protested they called in a cop.
In command of the guard was a shavetail named José, a val-
iant young don with a weakness for janes,
And so great was her beauty this bold second loot he could not
do his duty and put her in chains.

"I'm sorry, my dear, to appear to arrest you,—at best you are hardly much more than a kid.
If I let you go, say, there'll be some exposé. But beat it," said José. And beat it she did.
The scene now is changed to a strange sort of tavern—a hangout of gypsies, a rough kind of dive,
And Carmen, who *can* sing, is warbling and dancing, awaiting her date the late loot to arrive.
In comes Escamillo the toreadoro and sings his great solo 'mid plaudits and cheers,
And when he concludes, after three or four encores, the gypsies depart and Don José appears.
These gypsy companions of Carmen are smugglers, the worst band of bandits and cut throats in Spain.
And José, we know well's A.W.O.L. Says he "Since that's so, well I guess I'll remain."
The gypsies depart to the heart of the mountains, and with them goes José who's grouchy and sore.
For Carmen, the flirt, has deserted poor José, and transferred her love to the toreador.
And as he sits sulking he sees Escamillo. A challenge is passed and they draw out their knives.
Till José, though lighter, disarms the bull fighter and nears kills the blighter when Carmen arrives.
Now comes Micaela, Don José's young sweetheart, a nice looking blonde without much in her dome.
Say's she, "Do you know, kid, your ma's kinder low, kid?" Says José, "Let's go, kid," and follows her home.
At last we arrive at the day of the bull fight; the grand stand is packed and the bleachers are full;
A picturesque scene, a square near the arena, the Plaza del Toro or Place of the Bull.
Dark skinned senoritas with fans and mantillas, and haughty Castilians in festive array;
And dolled out to charm men, suspecting no harm, enters, last of all, Carmen to witness the fray.


CARMEN
CIGARS
FANCY
WRAPPER
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But here's our friend José who seizes her bridle. A wild homicidal glint gleams in his eye.
He's mad and disgusted and cries out, "You've busted the heart that once trusted you. Wed me or die!"
Though Carmen is frightened at how this scene might end, I'm forced to admit she is game to the last.
She says to him "Banish the notion and vanish. *Vamos!*" which is Spanish for "run away fast."
A scream and a struggle! She reels and she staggers, for Don José's dagger's plunged deep in her breast.
No more will she flirt in her old way, that's certain. So ring down the curtain, poor Carmen's at rest.

Hamlet

Hamlet

Last night the boss slips me a ticket
Fer one o' them opera shows
An' the name o' the show is called Hamlet,
So I breaks out my glad rags and goes.
Well, it's gloom from the moment it opens
Till the time the theayter shuts,
An' the company's half o' them looney,
An' the rest o' the cast is all nuts.
The tenor's a goof known as Hamlet,
But his real name's George W. Gloom.
He's a regular Life o' the Party;
He's as jolly an' gay as a tomb.
His old man was King o' the Denmarks,
An' the poor simp's gone weak in the bean,
Fer his dad has been croaked by his uncle
Who, right afterwards, marries the Queen.
So young Hamlet just hangs around sad like,
An' he talks to hisself like a nut,
But as yet he ain't hep that his father
Was bumped off by his uncle,—the mut.
One night he slips out o' the castle,
An' goes up on the roof fer some air,
When along comes the ghost of his father,
An' he shoots him an' earful fer fair.
"That lowlife, your uncle, has croaked me,
An' he's went off an' married your ma.

Will you let that rat hand you the haha?"
Says Hamlet, "Just notice me, pa!"

Young Ham has a frail called Ophelia,
An' her pop is a dreary old goof,
An' they can't dope why Hamlet's gone batty.
They don't know what he seen on the roof.
Well, Ham goes an' calls on his mother,
An' he bawls the old girl out fer fair,
Then he sees somethin' move in the curtains,
An' he thinks that the uncle is there.
So he jabs with his sword through the curtain,
An' he cries "Now we're even, my lad."
But it isn't the King but Polonius,
An' he's killed poor Ophelia's old dad.

Then Ophelia, poor kid, just goes daffy
When she hears how her old man is crowned,
An' she goes around singing like crazy,
Till she walks in the lake and gets drowned.
There's a jolly old scene in the graveyard
Where Prince Hamlet gets into a scrap
With Ophelia's big brother, Laertes,
Who wants to muss up Hamlet's map.

Then the King says, "Now boys don't act nasty.
I know how to fight this thing out.
I've got some tin swords at the castle,
An' we'll frame up a nice friendly bout."
Then he winks at Laertes an' whispers,
"We'll knock this here nut fer a gool,
I'll smear up your sword with some poison,
An' we'll make Hamlet look like a fool."

So they pull off the bout like they plan it,
But the King thinks his scheme may slip up,
So he orders a cold drink for Hamlet,
An' some poison he sneaks in the cup.
Then Ham and Laertes start fighting,
An' the King slips Laertes the wink,
But the Queen she ain't wise to what's doin',
An' she swallers the King's poisoned drink.
Then Hamlet gets stuck in the shoulder,
An' he sees how he's framed from the start,
So he switches the swords on Laertes,
An' he stabs the poor bum through the heart.
Then he runs his sword right through his uncle,
An' he says "Well, let's call it a day."
Then the Queen dies, the King dies, an' Ham dies,
I calls it a heleva play.

Thais

Thais

One time, in Alexandria, in wicked Alexandria,
Where nights were wild with revelry and life was but a game,
There lived, so the report is, an adventuress and courtesan,
The pride of Alexandria, and Thais was her name.

Nearby, in peace and piety, avoiding all society,
There dwelt a band of holy men who'd built a refuge there;
And in the desert's solitude they spurned all earthly folly to
Devote their days to holy works, to fasting and to prayer.

Now one monk whom I solely mention of this group of holy men
Was known as Athanael; he was famous near and far.
At fasting bouts or prayer with him no other could compare with
him;
At ground and lofty praying he could do the course in par.

One night while sleeping heavily (from fighting with the devil he
Had gone to bed exhausted while the sun was shining still),
He had a vision Freudian, and though he was annoyed he an-
Alyzed it in the well-known style of Doctors Jung and Brill.

He dreamed of Alexandria, of wicked Alexandria;
A crowd of men were cheering in a manner rather rude
At Thais, who was dancing there, and Athanael, glancing there,
Observed her do the shimmy in what artists call The Nude.

Said he, "This dream fantastical disturbs my thoughts monastical;
Some unsuppressed desire, I fear, has found my monkish cell.
I blushed up to the hat o' me to view that girl's anatomy,
I'll go to Alexandria and save her soul from Hell."

So, pausing not to wonder where he'd put his summer underwear,
He quickly packed his evening clothes, his tooth brush and a vest.
To guard against exposure he threw in some woollen hosiery,
And bidding all the boys good-by, he started on his quest.

The monk, though warned and fortified, was deeply shocked and mortified
To find, on his arrival, wild debauchery in sway.
While some lay in a stupor sent by booze of more than two per cent.,
The others were behaving in a most immoral way.

Said he to Thais, "Pardon me. Although this job is hard on me,
I gotta put you wise to what I come down here to tell.
What's all this sousin' gettin' you? Cut out this pie-eyed retinue;
Let's hit the trail together, kid, and save yourself from Hell."

Although this bold admonishment caused Thais some astonishment,
She coyly answered, "Say, you said a heaping mouthful, bo.
This burg's a frost, I'm telling you. The branch of hooch they're selling you
Ain't like the stuff we used to get, so let's pack up and go."

So forth from Alexandria, from wicked Alexandria,
Across the desert sands they go beneath the blazing sun;
Till Thais, parched and sweltering, finds refuge in the sheltering
Seclusion of a convent, and the habit of a nun.

But now the monk is terrified to find his fears are verified;
His holy vows of chastity have cracked beneath the strain.
Like one who has a jag on he cries out in grief and agony,
"I'd sell my soul to see her do the shimmy once again."

Alas! his pleadings clamorous, though passionate and amorous,
Have come too late; the courtesan has danced her final dance.
The monk says, "That's a joke on me, for that there dame to croak on me.
I hadn't oughter passed her up the time I had the chance."

Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel's folks were broke,
Folks were broke and it wasn't a joke.
They needed new shoes and a hat and a cloak,
And they didn't have much to eat.

Their mother said "Children go out in the wood,
Out in the wood and look for some food.
Some berries you'll find if you're both very good,
And for supper we'll have a fine treat.

So the children went out and they hunted around,
Hunted around till some berries they found.
The luscious strawberries they plucked from the ground,
Till they'd gathered up nearly a crate,

But now it was late and there wasn't much light,
Wasn't much light; they were stricken with fright.
So they both said their prayers and turned in for the night,
And they slept till next morning quite late.

And when they awoke, there they saw a small hut,
Saw a small hut with the windows all shut.
"It looks rather tiny," the children said, "but
Perhaps it is good to eat."

From the roof of the house then they broke a big slice,
Broke a big slice and it tasted quite nice.

It was made of French Pastry and candy and spice.
And of cookies and sugar plums sweet.

Then out of the house came an ugly old witch,
Ugly old witch, in her hand was a switch.
When she saw the two children she cried, "Well that's rich!"
And she dragged them inside in a rage.

Then she opened the oven, 'twas burning quite hot,
Burning quite hot, so she brought a big pot,
And she said, "These two children I'll cook on the spot,
And I'll stuff them with parsley and sage."

"We don't like this at all," then the children both cried,
Children both cried, "to be roasted and fried!"
So they pushed the old witch through the oven doors wide,
And, when she was in, slammed the door.

Then the children ran home just as fast as they could,
Just as fast as they could they ran home through the wood,
And they promised their parents they'd be very good,
And they'd never get lost any more.

Lohengrin

Lohengrin

In the first act Wagner tells about the sad affairs of Elsa,
Young and fair too, she was heir to
All the duchy of Brabant.
People said somehow or other she had murdered her young brother,
But she claimed her folks had framed her,
And the whole thing was a plant.

Now of quite another sort, rude, mean and envious was Ortrud.
She had wed a count named Fred, a
Man of most unpleasant traits.
And though nothing was absurder, yet they'd framed this charge of murder.
Elsa's land, too, they had planned to
Seize and all her large estates.

On the morning of the trial, on a grassy plain nearby, a
Lot of swells await poor Elsa,
The defendant, to appear.
Now, at last, she comes arrayed in spotless white, a lonely maiden.
Bows politely to the knightly
Crowd and murmurs, "Well, I'm here."

Loud the trumpets blow their fanfares, but no knight or other man fares
Forth in splendor to defend her,
And poor Elsa's doom seems sealed.
But behold there in the distance speeds a knight to her assistance,
Crying, "On, bo!" to his swan boat
As he hastens toward the field.

Out he leaps, his weapon flashing through the air, and Fred falls crashing.
Though unhurt he's bruised and dirty.
But the victor's calm and cool.
Says the knight to Fred, "Now beat it. On your way, or I'll repeat it,
But the next time, if I'm vexed, I'm
Going to knock you for a gool."

"Kid you're there," says Elsa sweetly "and I'll say you done that neatly.
I can't pay you for the way you
Crowned that great big piece of cheese.
Let's get spliced to-morrow morning." "Done" he says "but heed my warning:
Never seek to make me speak to
Tell you what my name is, please."

So in time their troth is plighted, and the happy pair, united,
Seek seclusion from intrusion
In the quiet of their room.
But in come the neighbors flocking to their bedroom without knocking.
Friends and cousins by the dozens
Serenade the bride and groom.

But when all the merry hearted serenaders have departed,
Elsa queries "Tell me dearie,
Who you are and what's your name?
Seems to me it's rather shameless for a wife to go 'round nameless.
No grass widow am I, kiddo,
Nor a Lucy Stone League dame."

Says her husband, rather gloomy "Well, you've broke your promise to me.
I'll bet no man's wedding romance
Ever busted up so soon.
Since you've asked my name of course you realize I must divorce you.
Kid, I'm through, so pack your trousseau.
This concludes our honeymoon."

At these words a noise is heard. A rough neck band intent on murder
Quickly dash in bandit fashion
And attack the unknown knight.
"Curse you, Fred!" he cries. "No pup shall safely interrupt my nuptials!"
Then he grabs him, calmly stabs him,
Kills Count Fred and ends the fight.

To the plain comes Elsa grieving for her knight who now is leaving.
Clad in mail he glitters gaily
As he nears the fateful spot.
"Well" he says "my name is Lohengrin; not Murphy, Smith nor Cohen.
And your brother is no other
Than the bird that pulls my yacht."

So the lad, restored by magic, ends this drama sad and tragic,
Elsa, crying, falls back dying,
But her knight just leaves her flat.
Any man who acts so formal toward his wife is not quite normal.
No sane guy'd forsake his bride for
Such a damn fool cause as that.

La Traviata

La Traviata

When Alfred Germont was a boy
He used to be quite fond
Of running round with *hoi polloi,*
And with the *demi monde.*
To tell the truth, their ways uncouth
Were pleasing to this foolish youth
Who thought it lots of fun, forsooth,
To know the *demi monde.*

And so, when Alfred older grew,
Ignoring wagging tongues,
He fell for Violetta who
Had trouble with her lungs.
A lovely dame of evil fame
Who lived a life of sin and shame;
But Alfred loved her, just the same,
Despite her damaged lungs.

With anger Alfred's dad turned pale,
And said "I'm awful peeved.
That Alf should fall for such a frail
I wouldn't of believed.
It didn't hurt to see him flirt,
But now he's went and done me dirt.
That Alf should fall for that there skirt
I wouldn't of believed."
"I guess it's up to me" he thought
"To queer this business quick.

Them kind of janes can all be bought,
Some kale will do the trick."
For Alfred's dad when but a lad
Had been quite gay himself, he had;
And so he knew, though things looked bad,
That cash would do the trick.

So Old Man Germont went to call
On Violet next day.
"I know you think I got a gall"
He said "To talk this way.
But hear my prayer," said Germont, *pere,*
"And give that lad of mine the air.
I'll stake you, kid, if you'll play fair,
And send him on his way."

Then Violetta with a tear
Exclaimed, "You got a nerve!
To pull that line on me, old dear,
Is what I don't deserve.
I sure do hate to get the gate
When once I start to travel straight.
I'll shake the lad, but let me state,
It ain't what I deserve."

When Alfred heard the tearful news
He cried "She done me wrong!
I'll drown them Traviata Blues
In women, wine and song.
I've stood enough; I'll call her bluff,
And show her she can't pull that stuff.
Just watch Kid Germont cut up rough
With women, wine and song."

And so he gambles half the night
At craps and Red and Black.
He cleans up everything in sight
And wins a lot of jack.
He gives a cry, for, right nearby,
Stands Violetta with a guy.
Alf grabs his coin, and in her eye
He throws his pile of jack.

Next day the poor girl's cough grows worse.
She knows she's nearly through.
She calls the doctor and the nurse,
And send for Alfred too.
"The doctors, they" she moans, "all say
I'll croak to-night. I'm on my way."
Says Al, "This really spoils my day!"
And Alfred meant it, too.

Die Walküre

Die Walküre

A *schöne mashpocha,* them Hundings! That *rosher*
Old Marcus Hunding, I never knew it such a feller in my life.
And his wife Siegel Hinda ain't just what you'd maybe call *kosher;*
The way she carried on with that guy Sigmund, believe me, you should now have it such a wife!
Wie heisst Siegel Hinda? In the old country yet was it
Hinda Siegel good enough for her before she got swell,
When her husband bought it a bungle-loaf up in Sullivan County (ten dollars a month and twenty-five down on deposit)
With a tree growing in the middle and a sword stuck in it like a cozy corner in the Arverne Hotel.
Nu, one night when Hunding ain't yet come up on the five-thirty (Might'll be he's playing a *bissel* pinochle with the boys and missed his train),
Come's a feller by the name Sigmund Walinsky all soaking wet like a fish and dirty,
And with *oser* a word lays down by the open-work fire-place out of the rain.
"Might you should be so kind," he says, "I could have a drink of water?"
Nebich I'll get it myself," says Siegel Hinda. "It's so hard here in the mountains to keep maids."
And she brings in a pitcher what Hunding for her last wedding anniversary bought her,
When in comes Hunding, looking mad like he has just went bait on a four hundred hand in spades.

Awhile they *schmoos;* then Hunding says to him "Maybe
Might'll be you are a relation by Walinsky Bros. from Little Falls?"
"No," says Sigmund, "I ain't got no relations in this country. My whole *mashpocha* died when I was a baby.
My father, *olav hasholem,* came from Cracow *and heisst* Wälse.
One time when my father *selig* is gone out fishing
Comes a lowlife *baitzemer* and murders my mother, *olav hasholem,* and kidnaps my little sister away.
Hunding the feller's name is, and I'm wishing
Only I should just run into that *rosher* some fine day."
"You should live so long!" cries Hunding getting mad like.
"A *chutzpah,* you should talk so here in my house under my very face.
To-night you can sleep here, God forbid, because you're looking kinder tired and bad like,
But to-morrow we'll fight it a duel fight, so help me, and I'll *schmier* you up all over the place."
After, when Hunding's in bed and sleeping quiet,
Siegel Hinda sneaks out in the dining room where Sigmund is laying on the boor.
"Quick!" she says. *"Der Goy schlaft.* Let's get out from here before he could start a riot."
So Sigmund pulls the sword out which it is stuck in the tree, and after they sing a loud song for ten minutes or half an hour they go out the door.
In a wild place in the mountains, all rocky and hilly,
A crowd of fat circus riding girls are standing around, making an awful *geschrei.*
"Oi, oi, oi—yo!" they yell, which it all sounds kind of silly.
Comes a very fat one by the name Broun Hilda, who looks like maybe she is from the Heywood Broun *mashpocha,* and joins in the cry.

R·I·

Her father Wotan, which he is the same Wälse that Sigmund tells about, only he ain't died in Cracow—his first wife Erda is her mother—

Says, "Hilda, my wife Fricka says we got to help it Hunding should win the fight.

If you only knew the life I got with that woman. If it ain't one thing, y'understand me, it's another."

And Hilda says, "I got it *rachmonis* for that Sigmund, but if you say so, pa, all right."

Now comes Sigmund, and Hunding after him like Jake Dempsey fighting,

When Hilda butts in and tries to make it Sigmund should win instead.

All of a sudden Wotan rushes out all mad and exciting,

"A business!" he says, and gives Sigmund a terrible *schlag* and the poor *schlemiehl* falls down dead.

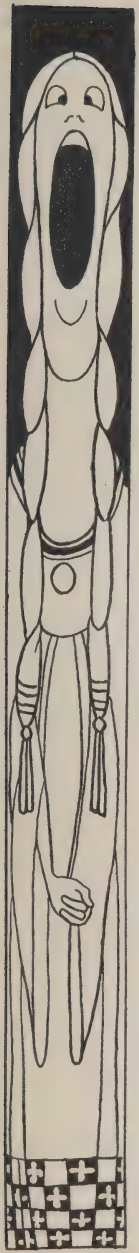
"Nu," says Wotan to Hilda, when he afterwards found her,

"It ain't my fault, y'understand me, but my wife, *umbeschrieen*, says I must punish you for acting that way."

So he puts her to sleep on a rock and builds a swell bunfire around her,

And there she sleeps with the thermometer two hundred and fifty degrees in the shade. . . . A *meshuggina* play!

Tristan and Isolda

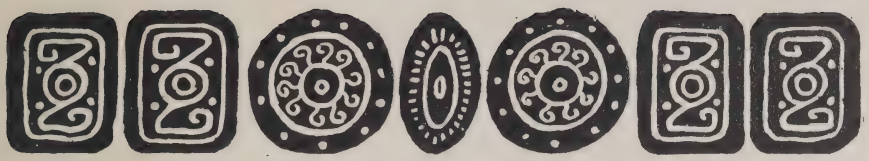


Tristan and Isolda

Isolda was an Irish queen who always
spoke in German,
Though why she canned her native tongue
I never could determine.
King Mark had heard about her charms
from people who had met her,
And so he sent Sir Tristan out to Ireland
for to get her.
Isolda she was loath to go, she did not
want to marry,
And all the way to England's shore she
warbled like Old Harry.
"To travel with that tenor for a girl like
me ain't no life,
I'll mix myself a dose of hooch and give
some to that lowlife."
Isolda's maid Brangaena didn't phone the
undertaker,
Instead she slipped a love draught in
Isolda's cocktail shaker.
It makes me blush to write about the
powers of that potion.
The way those two folks carried on you
haven't any notion.
Now poor King Mark was simple; no
suspicion did he harbor
That every night his wife and Tris were
mushing in the arbor.

Until by chance he came upon them, to their consternation,
In what the papers call a "compromising situation."
Now most kings you or I know would have acted kinda sour.
Not Mark. He struck an attitude and sang for half an hour,
Till Melot, glancing at his watch, observed that time was fleeting,
And stabbing Tristan in the ribs he busted up the meeting.
The scene now shifts to Kareol where the Tristans had a castle,
Our hero lies beneath a tree with Kurneval, his vassal.
The castle's rather shy of roof, the wall's about to tumble,
But Tristan says it's home to him, it matters not how humble.
A shepherd, piping on the hill, exclaims, "A ship I've sighted."
Isolda then comes dashing in and Tristan's quite delighted.
The sound of clashing swords is heard; the (so-called) plot now thickens,
And Mark appears upon the scene still singing like the dickens.
But Tris, alas, has passed away from wounds that Melot gave him.
Isolda sings the Liebestod; she came too late to save him.
She lies down—dead. The play is done; the curtain bell is ringing,
Thus ends this sad and tragic tale. And Mark? He keeps on singing.

Rigoletto



Rigoletto

Although some are afraid that to speak of a spade as a spade is a
social mistake,
Yet there's none will dispute it was common repute that fair
Mantua's Duke was a rake.
To continue the trope, Rigoletto, his fool,
Was a bit of a blade, but was more of a tool.

Rigoletto had hit with the barbs of his wit many prominent per-
sons at court,
Till at last they combined, in their anger, to find a conclusive and
fitting retort.
Which they found, as it chanced, in an opportune way
When they learned that he called on a girl every day.

Now the fool was devoted, it's proper to note, to his child,—his
one passion in life,
A sweet maiden and fair who'd been left in his care by the early
demise of his wife.
And this daughter named Gilda, he loved to a fault.
She'd a range from low G up to E flat in alt.

So one night, as they'd planned, the conspirator band stole the
maiden away from her dad.
When she came from the street to the Duke's private suite she
remarked, "Well, I guess I'm in bad."

. . . I need mention no more,
For the Duke was a rake, as I told you before.

It is needless to add that the jester was mad when he heard of the fate of his child,
And he cried "Watch the fool knock the Duke for a gool!" and made other threats equally wild.
"Though I'm odd I'll be even!" he punned through his tears—
Broken hearted he clung to the habit of years.

So in anger he flew to a gunman he knew, an assassin residing quite near,

And agreed on a plan with this murderous man to conclude the Duke's earthly career.
"You'll be paid for your pains," the fool hastened to say.
"The more pains you inflict, so much greater your pay."

Now, this man had a sister, a buxom young miss, who when business was active and brisk,
Like a dutiful maid helped him out with the trade, and divided the profits and risk.
And it happened that night—call it luck or a fluke,

That this girl, Madeline, had a date with the Duke.

When she learned that the end of her gentleman friend had been
scheduled to take place that night,
She exclaimed with a cry, "Brother, lay off that guy, for I don't
think you're treating me right.
Gawd knows I'm no angel but somehow I hate
For to see a lad beaned the one time I've a date."

Then the murderer said "Well, I'll bump off instead the first
stranger that comes to our place."
Madalena said "Great! Then I won't break my date." and pro-
ceeded to powder her face.
For in spite of her trade she was rather refined,
And extremely well bred for a girl of her kind.

At about ten o'clock came a diffident knock ('twas beginning to
thunder and pour),
And there Gilda stood, clad in the garb of a lad, as the murderer
came to the door.
So he stabbed her quite neatly three times in the back
And he wrapped up her corpse in an old burlap sack.

Rigoletto with glee paid the brigand his fee, then he dashed
through the rain and the wind.
When he opened the sack he was taken aback, and exclaimed "I'm
extremely chagrined.
I think that assassin deserves a rebuke
For he murdered my girl when I paid for a Duke."

Pelleas and Melisande

Pelleas and Melisande

Compared with this a grave or tomb
Would seem extremely jolly.
This opus takes the prize for gloom
And dismal melancholy.
A most unhappy man, I think,
Must be the author, Maeterlinck.

Beside a dark, depressing pond,
While hunting to beguile him,
Prince Golo came on Melisande,
Just out of an asylum.
At least when she began to speak
'Twas clear her intellect was weak.

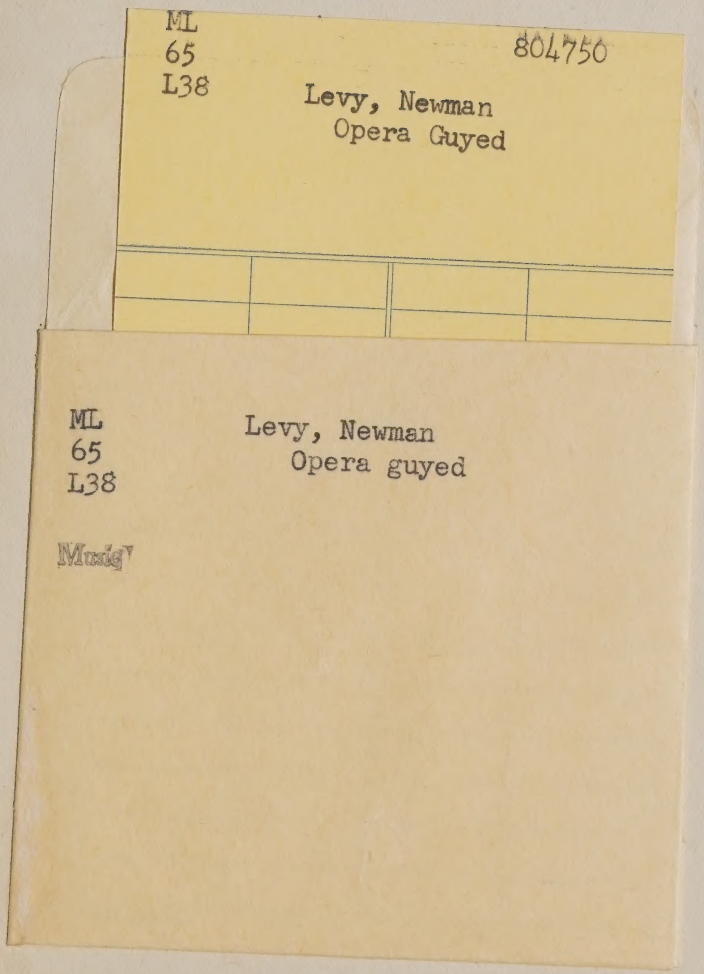
The maiden started with a cry,
Exclaiming "Pray don't harm me."
Said Golo "Be my bride for I
Am also slightly barmy.
I think you'll like my folks. In fact
My whole damned family is cracked."

I doubt if ever had a bride
A gloomier homecoming.

No sunlight reached the house
Beside
There wasn't any plumbing.
Said she "A morgue would be
more cheerful."
He answered "Mel, you said an
earful."
Their honeymoon was brief, alas,
For as the season wore on
She fell in love with Pelleas,
A handsome low grade moron;
Her husband's younger brother
who,
Though witless, had the wit to
woo.
At night she'd loose her golden
hair
From out her window casement
To Pelly who was standing there
Downstairs, outside the basement.
And as he grabbed her silken
tresses
He'd smother them with warm
caresses.
They'd meet each other every day
In dank unpleasant places,
And in an imbecilic way
Indulge in chaste embraces.
And once, beside a dismal pool
She lost her wedding ring, the
fool!
When Golo heard about the ring
(She thought he wouldn't mind
it)
He raved and swore like any-
thing,
And said "Go out and find it."

With Pellas she searched all night,
The poor simps didn't have a light.
At last it filtered through the bean
Of that poor half wit, Golo,
That Melisande's big third act scene
Was not exactly solo.
Said he "My royal pride is hurt.
I fear my wife has done me dirt."

And so that night he found the two.
(By now he'd grown to hate her.)
His brother on the spot he slew,
His wife died sometime later.
For harmless fun and merry banter
Give *me* Ed Wynn or Eddie Cantor.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